



Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**


**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 June 2025

**MOTION**

**Redistribution Commission**

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (6.09 pm): I wonder why I do not participate in this one-hour blight on sessional orders very often! Nonetheless, I am here.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maiwar has the call.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Broadly, I am here because I think this is an issue that is important enough to be bothered supporting. I certainly support the general thrust of the motion. Some of the detail I will leave to later.

We simply cannot overstate the fundamental importance of our electoral system to politics generally in Queensland. The role of the Redistribution Commission is so pivotal to that. I will agree entirely with the words of the Leader of the Opposition, my erstwhile opponent in the now abolished seat of Mount Coot-tha. We need to have faith in the basis for the decisions that the Redistribution Commission is making.

I do not think many of us would have thought we would see the day when we would agree with Santo Santoro quite so emphatically. The idea, which is so fundamental to the quote of his that has been included in the motion, is that the public perception here is so fundamental. I am not going to spend any of my time reflecting on Mr Sosso specifically. Plenty of others have spent their time on that. Quite frankly, I think it should be entirely reasonable to expect that someone both participates in public life as a public servant and has engagement with a political party according to their views. It is not about his political and personal views; it is about the potential or the perception risk of him being a member of the Redistribution Commission.

These are appointments—in fact, let's move a step back. It is always important that government appointments are made on merit—that they are made for proper purposes. Just like with any potential conflict of interest, we need to be absolutely scrupulous in making sure there is no conflict of interest or potential or perceived conflict of interest. I think it is even more important in this particular case, where we are talking about the very integrity of our electoral system—that ground floor for the whole of democracy in Queensland that we are talking about.

I will go a step further. I think there is plenty of evidence on both sides of this House. They both have form in terms of appointing friends, or at least people who are friendly or people who are friendly to their ideology, into very important roles. One might even call it—I will quote here—'handing out sweet deals for their mates'. I think there has been a bit of that happen under governments of all colours. This is so much more important because of not only the role but also the risk of perception of improper motives from this government. They have really dug a hole for themselves. We are seeing form. We are seeing form similar to what we have seen with the previous LNP government. We saw how popular that was with Queensland, right?

I want to look at one other recent appointment that I think is particularly telling. It is the person I quoted just a moment ago: 'handing out sweet deals for their mates'. I have come to know, probably better than most or many in this place, one Julian Simmonds, the former member for Ryan. This is a guy who has been a party hack, I suspect, since the day he set foot in university—certainly since the day he stepped out of the place when he started working in the Walter Taylor Ward electorate office until he took the role on after his boss moved into federal parliament. He then had no compunction whatsoever stabbing her in the back when he wanted to knock her off to get himself into the federal parliament. He took that seat. He got turfed out—shock, horror—after one term. Then, in one of the most exquisite displays of like a butthurt loser I have ever seen, he goes and starts up Australians for Prosperity to stand directly against those members who turfed out the Liberals. This is the guy who they have now chosen to appoint as the CEO of EDQ. This is less than six months after he is on his Australians for Prosperity site whingeing about Labor 'handing out sweet deals for their mates'. The hypocrisy is gobsmacking.

If that is their form, if that is the kind of appointment they have made within their first six months in the Queensland government, how is any Queenslander supposed to have faith in the rest of their appointments especially when they are refusing to hand over basic information like the advice, like the basis on which they have made this appointment? It is not hard.

Going to the detail of the motion, just give us the advice. It is nice to see Labor picking up on the idea that we should have impartial, non-government chairs on committees. Let's see how they go in estimates this year.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Your time has expired. I will also ask you to withdraw an unparliamentary term in amongst that too, if you would, please.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Certainly, I withdraw.